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Ministry of
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Ontario
Conciliation and
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Preventive Mediation

Joint Training Program

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All too often a constructive relationship between top management and union officials deteriorates because of counter productive friction between supervisors and stewards at the workplace. Frequently these difficulties can be traced to a misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities, and a lack of training in labour relations principles and practice.

The Preventive Mediation Program of the Ontario Ministry of Labour's Conciliation and Mediation Service is based on a conviction that establishing and maintaining a sound relationship between union and management is of paramount importance to their mutual well-being. To this end, OCMS is offering a training course of interest to both union and management. Each party has a mutual interest in supervisors and stewards with the skill and insight to deal with labour relations problems. Joint union-management training is a first step towards developing these skills.

Why is training necessary?

Training, despite the best of intentions, is usually one of those things put off until later.

When yesterday's hourly employee becomes today's foreman, or a union member is newly elected as officer or steward, both are thrust into new responsibilities for which they may have little or no training.

Without some basic understanding and skills in labour relations, the result is often confusion, confrontation and costly mistakes for both sides – conflict about *who* is right instead of *what* is right. Today's unresolved problems become tomorrow's issues in contract negotiations.

Whether it be new faces or old hands, the needs are the same. Union-management relations training can contribute to more confidence and a better understanding between supervisors and stewards in dealing with day-to-day problems at the workplace.

Why Joint Union/Management Training?

Both business and labour conduct educational programs for their respective representatives, but such programs usually focus on the advocacy of their respective viewpoints. The Ontario Conciliation and Mediation Service offers the unique dimension

of *joint union-management training* – supervisors and stewards learning labour relations principles and problem solving skills *together*.

Although supervisors and stewards often find themselves on different sides of an issue, they need the same skills to resolve that issue. The educational experience of learning together is an important first step in breaking down attitudinal barriers. The joint union-management training approach provides the opportunity to

- sharpen skills and perspective in dealing with minor problems before they become major issues;
- recognize and respect each other's role, rights, restrictions and responsibilities;
- understand each other's point of view;
- learn and discover how much they really have in common.

The objective of joint union-management training is to take the skills and principles learned together in the classroom and put them into practice at the workplace.

What does the program offer?

The focal point in joint training is problem solving. Working in close consultation with both parties, OCMS mediators determine their needs and design a training program to include the study of

- attitudes
- communications
- leadership
- grievance administration
- roles and responsibilities

A typical joint training program requires one day during which supervisors and stewards deal with realistic case studies, discuss training films and engage in 'reverse role playing' of typical grievance situations. They become actively involved through participation. Because OCMS mediators are on the daily labour relations firing line their instruction focuses on practical 'nuts n' bolts' subjects instead of classroom theory. However, OCMS mediators *do not* conduct contract interpretation training.

Who can participate?

Supervisors and stewards who participate in the joint union-management training programs are designated by their respective management and union officials. Classes may vary in size from 12 to 35 people. A timetable is developed in close consultation with both parties so that interference with normal work operations is minimal. While OCMS mediators provide the instruction at no cost to either party, the selection of training facilities and the cost of lost time for the participants is the responsibility of the parties.



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